

Cult survivors begin looking to fresh start

EDITOR'S NOTE: J. Robert Bazemore, an 11-year veteran on *The Bee*, is in Guyana covering the aftermath of the mass suicides and killings at the Peoples Temple commune in Jonestown.

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana — Today may bring a new start for most survivors of the dream-turned-nightmare that was Jonestown.

The government of Guyana is expected to decide sometime today which of the 78 Americans still being detained here in the capital will be allowed to return immediately to the United States.

It seems likely that, unless needed as witnesses by Guyanese police, the 29 defectors from the cult — those who either tried to leave with slain Congressman Leo Ryan or fled from the mass suicide at the jungle compound — will be returned home in the military airlift to Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. They probably will be joined by 46 other loyal members of the cult who happened to be housed at the temple's Georgetown headquarters on that fateful Nov. 18.

The fate of Modestan Michael Prokes and two other Jones' aides, Tim and Mike Carter, is less certain. "We're hoping we'll be allowed to go home," said Prokes Monday night. "We're hoping no charges will be brought."

Since Saturday, when they were released from jail, the three have shared quarters in the Park Hotel with the 29 cult defectors. After an



AP Laserphoto

Tim Carter, left, his brother Mike, right, and Michael Prokes, back to camera, are hauled in police van for questioning in deaths of Congressman Leo Ryan and 4 others.

initial confrontation — brought about by fears on both sides — an "understanding" was reached by Prokes and Dale Parks, spokesman for the defectors. And, after 25 hours of living on the hotel veranda, Prokes and the Carters were assigned a room in the hotel.

They were in that room Monday night — sprawled on the bed, stripped down to their undershorts in the heat of the tropical night — still talking, still trying to understand what had happened to their vision of Utopia.

All three were tired, Tim Carter — who fell asleep during the interview — especially so. At 1 p.m. the three had been taken back to the police station for additional interrogation by assistant police commissioner Cecil A. "Skip" Roberts.

"It wasn't heavy," Prokes said, "but they concentrated a lot on Tim."

For four hours, while his companions waited in the hallway, the elder Carter brother was questioned about his role in the Peoples Temple. Someone, perhaps a member of a San Fran-

cisco group opposing the temple, Carter thinks, had told police he instigated the mass suicides.

"It's a f---g lie," Carter said, explaining he thinks police are suspicious because he, while on home leave a month ago, helped arrange Ryan's visit.

Carter returned to Jonestown just three days before Ryan was scheduled to arrive and, he said, tried to convince the Peoples Temple leader, the Rev. Jim Jones, that the visit was not a threat.

"What I told Jim was that they (temple opponents) are expecting you to overreact. I told Jim not to overreact, to let them come in," said Carter, adding, "But it didn't do any good."

The three — who were ordered out of Jonestown during the mass suicide, given guns and a suitcase of money to be delivered to the Soviet embassy and then turned themselves in to officials — aren't sure if their answers satisfied Guyanese police. They disclaim knowledge of the inside opera-

tions of the temple, but defectors insist they were Jones' trusted aides, that Prokes was his "heir apparent."

"We don't know if we're going to have to go back for more questioning today," Prokes said. "We don't know if they're going to let us go." He does know that, if they are returned to the United States, they'll have to face the same questions all over again — this time from FBI agents expected to be awaiting the Jonestown group in Charleston.

While Guyanese police are deciding which Americans will be detained — either as suspects or witnesses — the Guyanese cabinet will meet today to discuss the future of Jonestown, closed Monday after 48 members of the international press corps were given a long-sought look at the compound.

As the visitors departed and dusk settled on the jungle clearing where some 900 men, women and children had labored and then died, Guyanese Army troops sealed off the settlement.